



FAQ: A+ Scholarship Reimbursement Requirements for the 2015-2016 Academic Year

On September 3, 2015, the Coordinating Board for Higher Education adopted a plan of action to avoid a potential funding shortfall for the 2015-2016 academic year. The adopted plan has two components:

1. Require students to complete 12 semester credit hours or the equivalent (6 hours during the summer term) each semester in order to maintain eligibility for the next semester. Students enrolled in clock hour programs must complete 90% of the hours required for the federal payment period to maintain eligibility for the next payment period. A course is considered complete if the student earns a standard grade for the course, including a failing grade but excluding a grade at withdrawal prior to completion.

A student that does not complete the required number of credit or clock hours during a term would be ineligible for the following term of enrollment. For the 2015-2016 academic year this means a student that does not complete 12 credit hours in the fall 2015 term will be ineligible for a spring 2016 award. During the spring 2016 semester of ineligibility, the student would need to complete at least enough credit hours to total 12 credit hours when combined with the fall 2015 term in order to regain eligibility for the next period of enrollment. For example, a student that completed 9 credit hours in the fall 2015 term would have to complete a minimum of 3 credit hours in the spring 2016 term to regain eligibility for the next period of enrollment. Students in clock hour programs would remain ineligible until they have made up the missed hours.

2. Require all students whose first A+ eligible enrollment is either a summer or fall term to achieve at least a 2.0 semester grade point average (on a 4.0 scale) at the end of the fall term. Students that do not achieve at least a 2.0 grade point average during the initial terms of enrollment will be ineligible to receive an A+ award until their cumulative grade point average is at least a 2.5. Students must still achieve a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) or the equivalent by the end of their first academic year in order to maintain eligibility for the following academic year.

MDHE announced the CBHE's action on September 4, 2015. Since that announcement, we have received several questions about the implementation of the plan. Following are answers to the questions we have received. Additional questions will be answered as they are posed.

Q1: The A+ Scholarship regulation provides allowable exceptions to full-time enrollment for students that are enrolled in all available hours applicable to the program of study for the term, are

participating in a required internship, or are enrolled in prerequisite courses that do not require full-time enrollment. In addition, full-time is defined as a minimum of 6 hours for students that meet the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Are students in these situations now required to complete 12 credit hours in the fall 2015 term?

A1: The definition of, and the established exceptions to, full-time enrollment still apply for the 2015-2016 academic year. However, students that enroll in less than 12 credit hours as a result of qualifying for one of the exceptions to full-time enrollment or having a qualifying disability must complete all of the hours in which they enroll in the fall 2015 term to be eligible for a spring 2016 award.

Q2: Are students that are not enrolled in/do not receive A+ reimbursement for the fall 2015 term eligible for a spring 2016 award?

A2: The requirement that students complete 12 credit hours in fall 2015 only applies to students who are enrolled in the fall 2015 term and have a positive net disbursement for that term. A positive net disbursement occurs when the disbursement amount less any returned funds is greater than zero.

Students that do not enroll in any fall 2015 coursework, including mid-year high school graduates, will be **eligible** for a spring 2016 award provided the student meets all of the program's other eligibility criteria.

Students that have a zero net disbursement for the fall 2015 term also will be **eligible** for a spring 2016 award. There are many circumstances in which these situations could occur, including but not limited to:

- The student is not eligible for an A+ award because the student is not enrolled full time and does not meet one of the allowable exceptions for full-time enrollment.
- The student opts to pay the fall 2015 tuition and fee bill out-of-pocket. This would include situations where the student did not complete 12 credit hours as a result of withdrawn coursework and would apply whether the withdrawal was partial or complete.
- The student is a renewal student that is ineligible for a fall 2015 award because he did not meet the 2.5 cumulative grade point average, or any other renewal requirement.
- The student is eligible for a fall 2015 award, but the award is reduced to zero when the Pell grant is applied to tuition and general fees.

Students that complete less than 12 hours in the fall 2015 term but choose to receive A+ reimbursement for the remaining coursework will have a positive net disbursement for that term. As a result they will be **ineligible** for a spring 2016 award. Institutions that opt to handle withdrawn coursework by reducing the next term's award must reduce the award for the next term in which the student is enrolled and eligible.

For example, a student withdraws from a 3 credit hours course and, as a result, only completes 9 credit hours in the fall 2015 term. This student is ineligible for the spring 2016 term but successfully re-establishes eligibility for the summer 2016 term. To address the fall 2015 dropped course, the school would need to reduce the summer 2016 award amount by the reimbursement amount for the withdrawn 3 credit hours from fall 2015. MDHE will re-evaluate the methods of handling withdrawn coursework if this temporary measure becomes permanent.

Q3: Are all students required to meet the 12 credit hour completion requirement, or is it limited to initial students like the 2.0 grade point average requirement?

A3: The 12 credit hour completion requirement applies to all students, both initial and renewal. The 2.0 grade point average requirement applies to initial students only. An initial student is one that is eligible for A+ reimbursement and has not received reimbursement in any prior award year (July 1 to June 30).

Q4: Is the 2.0 grade point average based on the student's grade point average for the fall 2015 term only, or do students have to achieve a cumulative 2.0 grade point average?

A4: Initial students must achieve a cumulative 2.0 grade point average at the end of the fall 2015 term. In addition to the fall 2015 term GPA, the cumulative GPA may also include the summer 2015 GPA; any coursework the school accepts in transfer, as included in the cumulative GPA per institutional policy; and any dual credit coursework included in the cumulative GPA per institutional policy. The student's cumulative GPA at the end of the summer 2015 **will not** affect the student's eligibility for a fall 2015 award. Some examples follow.

Example 1: Student A attends an A+ institution for the first time in fall 2015, has never attended any other institution, and did not take any dual credit courses in high school. Student A's cumulative GPA at the end of the fall 2015 term will be calculated based on the coursework taken in the fall 2015 term.

Example 2: Student B attends an A+ institution for the first time in summer 2015, has never attended any other institution, and did not take any dual credit courses in high school. Student B does not enroll in the fall 2015 term but plans to enroll in spring 2016. Student B's cumulative GPA at the end of the fall 2015 term will be calculated based on the coursework taken in the summer 2015 term.

Example 3: Student C attends an A+ institution for the first time in summer 2015, has never attended any other institution, and did not take any dual credit courses in high school. Student C enrolls in the fall 2015 term. Student C's cumulative GPA at the end of the fall 2015 term will be calculated based on the coursework taken in both summer and fall 2015.

Example 4: Student D transfers to an A+ institution from a four-year institution in summer 2015 and has never received A+ before (an initial student). Student D took three dual credit courses in high school. Student D subsequently enrolls in the fall 2015 term. Student D's cumulative

GPA at the end of the fall 2015 term will be calculated based on the coursework taken in both the summer and fall 2015 terms, and may include the transfer and dual credit coursework, if it is the institution's policy to include such coursework in the cumulative GPA calculation.